

THE COTTAGE
11904 Old Marlboro Pike
Upper Marlboro
Prince George's County
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-985

HABS
MD
17-MARBU
13-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE COTTAGE

HABS NO. MD-985

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Location: 11904 Old Marlboro Pike, Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Present Use: Offices & field school for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Significance: The Cottage is an excellent example of a mid 19th-century Prince George's County plantation house in the side-hall-and-double-parlor plan, with Greek revival detailing. This dwelling type was popular among the wealthy planter and merchant class during the early to mid 19th century. Having been built in three descending sections, The Cottage is also a very good example of architectural telescoping. It remains as one of six frame dwellings in the Upper Marlboro area built or acquired for the heirs of Thomas Clagett VI of Weston.

The Cottage is also of interest for its historic outbuildings and landscaping. It has a number of noteworthy outbuildings, including an unusually large ice house and a tobacco barn with an intact tobacco press. The terraced front lawn, edged with boxwood, is a significant landscape feature, and adds to the prominence of the house on its site when viewed from the west.

Description: The Cottage is a three-part, frame, gable-roofed plantation house arranged in a telescoping plan. The main block, the original and largest of the sections, is a two-and-a-half story, three-bay-by-two-bay, side-hall-and-double-parlor plan structure, with entries at both the front and rear. The middle section is similar in appearance to the main block, although smaller, reversed in plan, and slightly setback at the south front. It is a two-story, three-bay-wide structure, also with entries to both the front and rear. The third section, to the east side, is also two stories but is only one-room deep and is slightly lower than the center section. It is setback considerably from the south front--flush with the north rear--adding to the overall telescoping effect. This is a two-story, two-bay-by-one-bay section with a doorway at the east end.

The main entry is to the north side of the west front of the original section. It has a full frontispiece with side, corner, and transom lights, with console brackets flanking the four-panel door. A rear doorway--which is slightly lower in elevation--has sidelights only. In the middle section there are also doorways to the front and rear, although it is the rear entry which is more elaborate, having a transom window and a portico (giving the house a front onto the driveway approach). The house is lit by six-over-six-light-sash windows (larger in the main block), with pediment-shaped window heads in the main block, and flat window heads in the other two sections. Porches, with a criss-crossing balustrade, run the length of the west front facade of the main block and middle sections. Each section has a low-pitched, side-gabled roof with bracketed

overhanging eaves and a boxed return cornice, also with brackets. There are two interior brick chimneys at the east gable ends of both the main block and the middle section.

On the interior (as mentioned) the main block has a side-hall-and-double-parlor plan. The stairhall is divided by an elliptical keystone arch, with pilasters. The two-run, open-string, open-well stairway rises along the west wall to a landing and continues along the east wall. It has a heavy turned newel post, tapering (tiger maple) balusters and rounded handrail (removed from first floor). There are scroll brackets in the step ends. The stair continues in the same manner to the third floor. The two parlors are joined by pocket doors, and each has a fireplace with a black faux-marble mantel with plain pilasters. The Greek Revival doorway and window surrounds have a raised center section flanked by astragal beads and concave grooves, and have bull's-eye corner blocks. The doors are four panel. There are high baseboards with crown molding.

On the second floor is a wide hall and two bedrooms, with a smaller room over the front entry. The bedrooms both have fireplaces with painted black mantels with plain pilasters. The doorway and window surrounds are simpler than those on the first floor, consisting of a wide band with a molded backband. The third floor consists of small hall with a doorway leading to one open room. The moldings are like those on the second floor, but narrower.

There is a full, dirt-floor cellar under the main block (divided into rooms as on the first floor), where the hand-hewn sills with mortise and tenon joints of the structural system are visible. Under the north rear parlor is what was the original kitchen. The walls of the kitchen area are finished with plaster, and there is an arched-opening cooking fireplace, complete with crane.

The center section consists of two connecting parlors to the east, with a boxed dog-leg stair, a bedroom and new bath to the west. The parlors have fireplaces with plain wood mantels. The doorway and window surrounds have a plain band with a molded backband. There are bedrooms above the parlors. The attic and basement of this section are both unfinished. The last section, to the east end, is the kitchen wing.

History:

The Cottage is one of six remaining frame dwelling houses built or acquired by Thomas Clagett VI for his children. Thomas Clagett--of the plantation known as Weston--was one of the largest landholders in the Marlboro area. The Cottage, as most of the other Clagett homesteads, remained in the Clagett family well into the 20th century. Thomas Clagett purchased this tract, 822 acres of Bealls Chance, Green Spring, etc., in equity from the representatives of John E. Berry in 1831. Along with additional lands acquired at about the same time, Thomas Clagett created two plantations, The Cottage and Strawberry Hill, totaling approximately 1,000 acres. Thomas conveyed The Cottage to his second

son Charles, at the time of his marriage to Mary Mullikin in 1846, and construction began on the present main block which included a kitchen in the cellar and a small two-story service wing to the east.

Charles Clagett produced tobacco--as well as raising livestock and producing wool--until the years after the Civil War when he gave up tobacco and increased his livestock production. In addition to farming, Charles Clagett served for twenty years as a judge of the County Orphans Court. He enlarged his home, probably in the 1860s, replacing an earlier service wing with the current center section, and likely, the current kitchen wing. The bracketed trim--which lends continuity to the various parts--was apparently added ca. 1880 when Ingleside and Navajo were built with similar treatment for two of Charles' sons on the adjoining property.

Upon his death in 1894, The Cottage passed to his younger son, William B. Clagett, whom Charles had previously provided with adjoining property for his home and farm known as Navajo. William continued to reside at Navajo, and The Cottage was leased to a tenant farmer. For most of the 20th century, The Cottage would continue to be leased. Upon the death of William in 1911, The Cottage was devised to his son, Charles, and his daughter, Marguerite. After the death of Charles--who lived and worked in Baltimore--The Cottage was conveyed to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation as a center for environmental education.

Outbuildings:

To the northeast of the house is an unusually large ice house. It is an oval, brick (common bond, 6:1) structure, approximately 16' deep, only 2'-3' of which is above ground. It is covered by a gable roof resting on brick piers, with doorways with vertical-board doors hung with strap hinges to the east and west gable ends. The roof is covered with wood shingles. On the interior, a large, stationary wood ladder rests against the north wall, providing access to the bottom of the pit where a shallow dug-out area covered with logs provided drainage.

To the east of the ice house is a gable-roofed, wood-frame meat house, resting on a brick foundation, with a board-and-batten shed addition to the rear. The meat house sits on a incline, with the south front entry at ground level. The front door is of vertical boards and is hung with strap hinges. The siding is of wide, tongue-and-groove boards. There are no windows. The exposed interior framing is of closely positioned studs with diagonal bracing at the corners, and hewn collar beams. The shed addition to the rear includes an outhouse to the east side, with a clean-out to the rear. The roof is covered with wood shingles.

Across a field to the north of the house is a complex of farm buildings including a barn, stable/shed, board-and-batten shed with corn crib, and a board-and-batten machine shed. The large early 20th-century tobacco barn has a raised-seam-metal gable roof and circular-sawn vertical siding with hinged panels that open for ventilation. There are double doors at the east and west gable ends and at the

north elevation. The interior includes the framing system and poles necessary for hanging tobacco to dry. In the southeast section of the barn is an old tobacco press used for packing tobacco into hogsheads.

Sources:

Pearl, Susan G. (PG Co. HPC). Maryland Historical Trust/National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, The Cottage, prepared december 1987.

On site investigation by Historian, Catherine C. Lavoie

Historian:

Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, January 1992.

Addendum to
The Cottage
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HABS No. MD-632
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Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

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